



The Virginia Saltwater Review

Plans and Statistics Department
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by

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OVERVIEW

The summer fishery is upon us, so name your pleasure. Flounder action continues to improve, along with cobia. Spadefish and deep dropping fishers are having some good days. And those looking for that elusive Chesapeake Bay slam (black drum, red drum, and cobia) in the same day are seeing many chances to hook up (or sometimes swim by!).

A couple of notes before the fishing report. First, many thanks to Jim Whitson and Jimmy Rogers, with the Hampton Creek Cobia Tournament, for providing a great event for all involved this past Saturday, June 14th.

Don Lancaster's Fishing Tidewater radio show (WPMH 670AM), regularly heard by anglers from 7 to 9 am on Saturday mornings, broadcast live from the event during the final hours of weigh-in. Jim and Jimmy had everything you could want in a tournament, and were only lacking for one item, big cobia! In what was best described as a 'finicky' day for cobia fishing, Aaron Tatem captured 1st place with a 43-pound cobia, taking home a Rolex watch and a check worth \$3,700. The Saltwater Review's own Dr. Julie Ball won the Ladies Division with an 18-pound cobia. Though only six cobia found the scales that day, VMRC's Biological Sampling Team was there to collect important data from each fish, and by this fall, we will announce the age and sex of each fish brought in.



HCCT 1st Place: Aaron Tatem's 43 pound cobia.



VMRC's Biological Sampling Team

Staff also wants to WELCOME BACK WALLACE'S to the *Marine Sportfish Collection Project*. The popular bait stop and fishing launch facility in the Grandview region of Hampton, where anglers can make a quick run out to Back River Reef or Bluefish Rock, has once again become one of our project donation sites.

So don't forget when you catch your cobia, or other noted species (see pages 8 and 9), fillet and release it into one of our collection freezers, in return for a project reward shirt or hat.

Red drum catch-and-release data is still needed! The Saltwater Review fishing reports have indicated another great red drum catch-and-release fishery, however very few specific reports have come in from anglers. VMRC is still needing to collect length data from red drum that anglers catch-and-release. In 2009, there will be a coastwide (Virginia to Florida) stock assessment of the red drum population, and information is lacking on the catch-and-release of red drum outside of the management slot limit (18 to 26 inches). Don't leave this information to the federal Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistical Survey (aka MRFSS) to estimate alone for Virginia. You can provide length and location information through the Virginia Saltwater Fisherman's Journal (www.vasaltwaterjournal.com).

THE FISHING REPORT

Chincoteague

It was a great week for fishing, according to Donna at Captain Bob's. Flounder have been caught everywhere! One of the hottest areas was near the Coast Guard base and along the channel to Inlet View Campground. Both the north and south side of Queen's Sound have been productive as well. She says there are keepers everywhere with minimal throwbacks. Kingfish are still holding steady to provide entertainment for everyone. Skate and puffer are also biting along with a few weakfish. Offshore, spadefish are hot at the wrecks. Tautog have been reported there as well, but anglers can't bring them in yet. Tuna have been hooked at the Lumpy Bottom, and sharks are still being brought in from the Parking Lot area. Large blue crabs were also caught last week.

Staff at Captain Steve's Bait and Tackle reports good flounder action. Anglers are finding them at the Queen's Sound, the Chincoteague Channel from Captain Bob's to Daisey's Dockside, and at the north side of Assateague Bridge. A 5-pound citation speckled trout was also brought in this week. Kingfish continue to be plentiful off of the surf and in the inlet. Small hooks and surfballs are key to catching these fish. At the wrecks, anglers are catching their limits of spadefish using small pieces of clam on small, strong hooks. At the Lumpy Bottom, black sea bass are biting. Offshore, the first few tuna were reported, including a 90-pound bluefin tuna.

Wachapreague

A decent catch of yellowfin tuna was reported from the Wachapreague Marina. Some were in the 40- to 45-pound range, and a few dolphin were caught during the offshore trips as well. Inshore, flounder fishing has been good with one keeper for every ten to twelve fish caught.

At Captain Zed's, anglers are still catching numerous flounder with keepers mixed in (several boats have had

4 keepers in one trip). Spadefish have been brought in from the bayside of the Eastern Shore. Citations for the week include a 7-pound, 13-ounce flounder and a 3-pound, 8-ounce croaker. Offshore, black sea bass continue to bite well at the wrecks, and charter boats reported gaffer dolphin and a bluefin tuna this weekend.

Cape Charles

According to staff at Chris' Bait and Tackle, Latimer Shoals continues to produce cobia up to 78 pounds. Spanish mackerel have been reported there as well. Spadefish in the 11- to 12-pound range are being caught at the Cell, but it generally takes anglers an entire day to catch them. Croaker are biting well at the Cherrystone Reef and the High Rise of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Flounder have also been reported near Oyster.

Fishing is improving at Cherrystone Bait and Tackle. Although no large fish were weighed in this week, flounder and croaker are biting in the area. Flounder are beginning to show around Buoy 36 and 38, and croaker are heavy throughout the bay.

Onancock

Captain Wil Laaksonen reports fishing has improved this week. Plenty of croaker and spot are biting, and some anglers are catching trout (speckled trout fishing has picked up). Red drum, both full-sized and puppy drum, have been caught, and flounder fishing continues to produce a few keepers for every 10 to 12 undersized fish. As the water temperature warms, Captain Wil reports that this is a typical summer, although there are much fewer boats on the water due to the spike in gas prices.

Lower Bay/Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel

No citations were reported this week at Cobb's Marina. Staff has heard reports of spadefish caught at the Chesapeake Light Tower and flounder being hooked at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel.

Sunset Boating Center reports cobia catches up to 60 pounds. Spadefish were brought in from the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel this week. Flounder have been caught as well, but most remain under the legal size limit of 19 inches.

Staff at Salt Pond's Marina weighed in a 76-pound, 7-ounce cobia this week. It was caught at Latimer Shoals by William Hardbower aboard the KELLY D. Other than cobia, staff has also seen legal-sized flounder (19 inches or greater), and a few spadefish this week.

At the York River Fishing Center, the spadefish bite has turned on. Citations this week include two spadefish caught at the Wolfrap Light—12 pounds, 7 ounces and 10 pounds, 8 ounces. Plenty of croaker up to 1.5 pounds are available with spot mixed in. Keeper flounder were also harvested this weekend.

Ken Neill, reporting secretary for the Peninsula Anglers Club, contributed the following:

Offshore action out of Virginia has been very good. The tuna bite has been sporadic, but the dolphin

bite has been very good with numerous large gaffers being caught. Blue marlin fishing is as good as it gets with boats getting two or three shots a day on fish averaging in the 400-500 pound class. Add in some white marlin, a few sailfish, wahoo, and even a few swordfish, and you have a good offshore mixed-bag offshore bite. Offshore bottom fishing is still good for tilefish, grouper and wreckfish. Amberjack are thick at the southern towers. Some large amberjack have shown up at the Chesapeake Light Tower and over some of the wrecks like the Gulf Hustler, Ricks, and Hanks. Spadefish are being caught at these same locations and further inshore. They are also at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, and the largest fish are being caught up the bay at the Cell, Wolfrap Light, and at the Range Tower. At least one very large spadefish was caught at the Monitor-Merrimac Bridge Tunnel. Spanish mackerel are plentiful along the ocean front and in the lower Bay. A lot of flounder are being caught with most not meeting the 19-inch minimum. Some really large flounder are being caught on hard structures like the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and Back River Reef on live bait. Cobia fishing is cobia fishing. You sit on a chum slick and you might catch a big one like the 82-pound fish Wes Blow caught at York Spit Light. Fish are also being caught by sight-casting so it is good to always have something ready to throw to one no matter what you are fishing for. The rivers of the Mobjack Bay are producing some large speckled trout. The drum bite just will not quit. Large red and black drum continue to be caught on the Inner Middle Grounds near the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

The saltwater action is heating up along the Mid-Atlantic coast and should continue to sizzle. Cobia chummers are content, with many boats returning from the shoals with keeper fish along with a few trophies up to 90-pounds. The area off Hampton, from north of the Rock Pile to off of Buckroe Beach is producing fish, while the Nine Foot Shoals area and Latimer Shoals are also good locations to try lately. Cobia are cruising on the surface and hanging around bridge pilings, but the majority of those are on the smaller side.

Although red drum catches are overshadowed by the cobia interest, reds are still available along Fisherman's Island and the Nine Foot shoal. Casters are also getting in a few throws to surfacing schools on Nautilus Shoal this week. Most of the black drum hook-ups are coming from the four artificial islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, where casters are catching fish on bucktails and Storm Lures.

Spadefish action is still hit and miss around the Chesapeake Light Tower, the Cell, and the 3rd and 4th islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. A 13-pound, 4-ounce spade was boated at the Monitor-Merrimac Bridge Tunnel by accident on 15-pound test recently. The fish underwent processing at Long Bay Pointe Bait and Tackle for consideration as a line class World Record, but a concern with the rig will likely foil approval from the IGFA.

Sheepshead action is also yet to transpire to a worth-while level, but after the 24th of this month, tautog are back up for grabs, which are often caught in the same vicinities. Remember for both tautog and sheepshead, only four fish are allowed per person, and tautog must stretch to at least 14 inches. Triggerfish are also in the same areas. Grey trout, decent croaker, and 3-pound bluefish are available at the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, while croaker are also biting off Ocean View and

around the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Speckled trout and puppy drum (juvenile red drum) are still available within the lower bay inlets, and within the back waters of Mobjack bay.

The flounder scene finally made an upward turn this week, with more keepers coming from the lower bay. A few doormats are coming from Oyster, the Cell area, Buoy 36A, and the four islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel this week.

If Spanish mackerel is your pleasure, these fish are making a great showing along the ocean front, and on up to the Middle Bay areas. Plenty of Spanish, with many in the 20- to 24-inch range, are chasing trolled Drone and Clark spoons in about 20 feet of water. These fish offer good, fast action for kids and guests. Watch for their close cousin, the king mackerel to make its debut soon.

Amberjack are swarming on accessible wrecks and navigation towers. Some are reporting some sketchy action recently, but citation-sized fish are there if you put in the time. Deep dropping along the Canyon edges is giving up some good numbers of deeper water species, such as tilefish and grouper. Black sea bass are also still available on structures from about 30-miles out and on out to deeper wrecks.

The Virginia offshore season is off to a good start, but the good early yellowfin tuna run has scattered. Good water continues to present for Virginia boats east of the Cigar area, where boats are finding great catches of gaffer dolphin to over 30 pounds and an exceptional number of blue marlin hook-ups and sightings. Greg Herman of Chesapeake boated a nice 26.5-pound bull dolphin from the same area this week. Billfish action continues to improve, while the occasional wahoo is still on the prowl. Big bluefin tuna to over 500 pounds were caught recently out of Oregon Inlet, North Carolina.

Virginia Middle Bay

Jett's Hardware reports that they had a very successful bluefish derby last weekend. Two of the more notable fish landed included a 25-pound striped bass and an 8-pound bluefish. Most of the fish caught in the derby were from the Wolftrap Light and to the north. They are still seeing a good number of croaker being caught as well.

Smith Point Marina is seeing keeper flounder being caught around the jetties of the Potomac River. Croaker and striped bass continue to be seen in good numbers, and spot in the area are growing larger as well.

Locklies' Marina has had good numbers of croaker, larger spot compared to the last few weeks, and rockfish. Most of the croaker and spot are being caught in the area from Carter's Creek to Mosquito Point.

Garrett's Marina reports the spot have been growing in size almost as quickly and they could be reeled in and the croaker have been getting a bit smaller compared to the last few weeks. Now that the spot are here in good numbers, people feel that the Spanish mackerel can't be too far behind. Reports from the south (aka North Carolina) have Spanish mackerel catches in the past week, so maybe they will start showing up soon.

Jerry Thrash, of Queen's Creek Outfitters, contributed the following:

Croaker are biting well everywhere with medium-sized spot mixed in. Saturday, our house guests with children who had never fished managed a dozen or so croaker in an hour off our Queen's Creek dock.

Flounder fishing at Buoy 42 and in the Cell area continues to improve. Finally decent numbers are being caught by experienced anglers. We weighed two citations this week, the first in about a month.

Spadefish continue to bite at the Cell and at Wolftrap, but there have been no feeding frenzies. Most who have caught them had only a few bites although there are a lot of fish visible. We weighed in five citations through Saturday: 3 from Wolftrap, 1 from the Cell, and 1 from the Rappahannock Range Light.

Speckled trout fishing slowed a bit. With a full moon mid-week and another crab shed underway, we may see another strong speck week. We registered two citation specks this week—one from the East River and one from the White's Creek area near the Hole-in-the-Wall.

Virginia Beach

From the Virginia Beach Fishing Center, offshore trips are doing very well. Last week boats reported numerous dolphin and a lot of billfish, including two blue marlin releases. Inshore, spadefish and cobia are biting in the inlet, and taylor bluefish, flounder, speckled trout, and puppy drum were also found in the area. Citations for the week consisted mostly of spadefish.

Inshore, Spanish mackerel are biting well along the oceanfront, according to Paula from Fisherman's Wharf Marina. Spadefish action at the Chesapeake Light Tower is on again off again. Offshore, around the 200 line, most boats are catching citation dolphin, and everyone has seen at least one billfish (mostly blue marlin, with a few white marlin mixed in). Amberjacks have been found around the South Tower.

Virginia Piers

At the Ocean View Pier, anglers are catching croaker, spot, and flounder. Keeper flounder (19 inches or greater) have finally shown up. Staff said that 6 keepers were caught during the day of the report alone.

Fishing at the Lynnhaven Pier has changed little from last week. Staff has noticed that everything is beginning to get a little bigger. Anglers can expect to find spot, croaker, weakfish, bluefish, and small flounder. Spanish mackerel are biting during the day, and sea mullet (also called roundhead) and spot are biting at night. Staff is also beginning to see blue crabs.

Staff at the Sandbridge Pier reports Spanish mackerel, taylor bluefish, sea mullet, and spadefish. The bluefish have been up to 3 pounds, and most of the Spanish mackerel has been in the 2.5- to 3-pound range.

Outer Banks, NC

Smoke from the forest fires continue to plague fisherman in the Nags Head area when the wind is out of the southwest. Water temperatures are also on the rise with the surf temperature reaching the 76-degree mark. Despite the smoke, the fishing has been good with Spanish mackerel making a strong appearance, and the number of keeper flounder on the rise.

Offshore fishing in the Nags Head area remains very good with large dolphin and yellowfin tuna. Blackfin tuna, wahoo, amberjack, king mackerel, and Atlantic bonito are also showing up more consistently. Unfortunately, catches of striped bass and red drum have dropped off to almost nothing. Bottom droppers, working the artificial reefs, continue to find triggerfish and black sea bass. People fishing Avalon Pier had their best luck fishing when the wind was from the south and east, with a southwest wind slowing down the fishing significantly. Bluefish were hitting early in the morning on plugs along with the occasional Spanish mackerel, but expectations are that the Spanish mackerels will be running hard soon. Speckled trout could be caught on bucktail/twister tail combinations in the mornings with a slower bite for the rest of the day. Triggerfish and spadefish were hanging around the pilings as well. The sound fishing was producing speckled trout and juvenile red drum around the Melvin Daniels Bridge. Keeper flounder were working the shallows of Oregon Inlet.

People fishing the offshore areas out of Oregon Inlet continue to have good luck with big yellowfin tuna, large dolphin and billfish. People fishing deep bottom areas are finding tilefish while those fishing in shallower water were finding triggerfish, croaker, and sea mullet. People trolling close to shore were having good luck with Spanish mackerel.

The bite on the beach south of Oregon Inlet has slowed up quite a bit. Bluefish could be caught on spoons and the Spanish were teasing anglers by the “old jump and no bite” routine. When a sea mullet was found there was a good chance it was citation sized. The jetties were producing small flounder and bluefish.

Offshore fishing out of Cape Hatteras has had excellent catches of dolphin and tuna with the occasional billfish. Closer to shore and in the sound the Spanish and bluefish bite has been solid and cobia continue their bite.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's THE SALTWATER REVIEW as the source of the fishing information.

Get Hooked!

Report at

www.vasaltwaterjournal.com

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission wants to know about the saltwater fish you caught and if you threw it back or took it home for dinner. How big was it? What species was it? Where did you catch it? This self-reported catch-and-release information will be posted on-line, giving the recreational angler a broader picture of what everyone else is catching -- and where.



The Fisherman's Journal is a tool intended to benefit the individual angler, the fishing community, and fishery managers. It allows individual anglers to keep an easy-to-retrieve record of their successful fishing experiences. It allows the fishing community to share and learn about other anglers' experiences. Finally, it benefits fishery managers by allowing them to assess fish populations by analyzing data provided by you, the recreational fisherman.

You will be able to report catch-and-release ranges, in addition to individual fish kept or released.

On those days that you catch-and-release 50 bluefish, you can just report the number caught and a range of lengths. Reporting individual measurements on more highly prized species -- such as Red Drum, Striped Bass and Flounder -- provides a greater benefit for everyone.

Anglers also may report their fishing trip information, including general location, time of day, weather and water conditions and type of gear and bait used. This information could be extremely valuable to other anglers to give them an idea of what is caught, where it is caught, and what bait is working on what species.

This self-reporting program will help anglers to become more successful and will provide fishery managers with important anecdotal information on recreational catches. The voluntary on-line reporting system is called the "Saltwater Fisherman's Journal," and is found at www.vasaltwaterjournal.com.












A screenshot of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's "Recreational Fishing Online Reporting" website. The page has a blue header with the commission's name and logo. Below the header, there's a section titled "Recreational Saltwater Fishing" with a "Welcome Jgrist," message. A prominent message states "Red Drum Reports are Needed!" and explains that they are collecting length data from red drum caught-and-release for a stock assessment. Another section titled "New 2008 Tautog Regs" lists fishing regulations: Closed Season (May 1 through June 24), Minimum Size Limit (14 inches), and Possession Limit (4 per person). A statistics box on the left shows data for June 16, 2008: Members: 1,457, Trips: 295, and Catches: 3,941. At the bottom, there are "Related Links" and "Help" sections.

**THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION
WANTS YOUR FISH....
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You catch it, you fillet it,
**but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,
please donate them to science.**



The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

COBIA		RED DRUM	
SHEEPSHEAD		BLACK DRUM	
SPADEFISH		TAUTOG	
TILEFISH		GROUPE	
KING MACKEREL		SPANISH MACKEREL	
BLUEFISH (OVER 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)			

In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a **ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT or HAT FOR EACH PARTICIPANT, PER MONTH.**

Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:

Bell Isle Marine (Hampton)

Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)

Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach)

Wachapreague Marina

Morningstar Marina – Gwynn's Island (formerly known as the Gwynn's Island Boatel)

Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton)

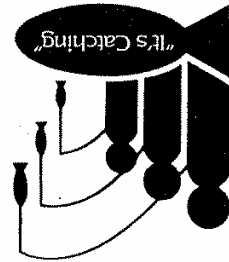
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